



MARK MOORE GALLERY | STATEMENTS **KIEL JOHNSON**

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STATEMENTS



Mark Moore Gallery: *Statements* introduces a featured gallery artist through images and candid interview. From noteworthy early examples to present bodies, the works featured in *Statements* act as an overview of the varying practices and movements implemented by a given artist in tandem with their thoughts and interpretations.

Kiel Johnson's drawings and sculptures tell tales; layered narratives speak of his travels and adventures through everyday life. His works become a springboard for metaphorical investigations of the world he inhabits. Although both factual fictions and absurd scenarios, they are ultimately testaments to observation that force us to question the concrete and truthful. What at first might appear safe and secure will be, upon further inspection, very precarious.

Johnson (b. 1975, Missouri) received his MFA at California State University, Long Beach (CA). He has received numerous awards and honors including the Pollock-Krasner Grant, 2008; Durfee Foundation ARC Grant, 2007; and the CSULB Outstanding Creative Achievement Award, 2003. He has had solo exhibitions in New York, Los Angeles, Kansas City and Irvine. His work appears in several important public and private collections including the Creative Artist Agency (CA), Tubert International (CA), Steve Martin Collection (NY), Todd Oldham (NY), and Sprint World Headquarters (MO). Johnson currently lives and works in Los Angeles, California.



The Cast, 2011. Ink and watercolor on paper, 19 x 24 inches.

KIEL JOHNSON

Interviewed by: Matthew Gardocki, Mark Moore Gallery



Is space the final frontier?

I heard that if you think of the existence of the Universe in terms of a long 8-mile road, the time humans have been here is represented by the last 3/4 inch! If we manage to make it another couple inches down that road, I do hope we get out to deep space. I think the biggest problem is that we only live 80 years or so. It's going to take a lot longer than that to get to where you're going. Then you have to come home. I can tell you for certain, *The Final Frontier* was the last record released by Iron Maiden a year ago.

In *The Problem of Space Travel: The Rocket Motor* (1928), there are a number of illustrations of futuristic space stations and rocket machinery that did not yet exist. The author had no point of reference for this type of machinery, and used only his imagination. Did you approach this new body of work with same type of naivety in respect to telescopes, satellites and robot-like forms?

Research comes in many different forms. I've snuck deep into the belly of the Queen Mary, taken blimp rides over LA, and once accidentally fell 30 feet off a microwave tower; all in the name of art projects. Most research, however, took place on the computer. To get to know the telescope, I collected a file of interesting telescope images and videos. I then set out to make drawings that embodied the best traits of the scopes I admire. A sort of evolution takes place, literally "survival of the fittest" parts. There was one scope in particular; from those drawings,

that I connected with most, a variation of which ended up in the middle of my studio, 9 feet tall. The 3-D version goes through even more of an evolution.

When viewing your drawings, they remind me of elements from Rube Goldberg, and his tricked-out inventions. Rube had a background in engineering that is on display with these inventions. What got you interested about the inner-workings of machinery?

I grew up regularly visiting large-scale industrial printing presses with my dad, and my brother and I took everything apart we could find, broken or not. We would dissect TV sets, radios, and old telephones, just to look inside, really. I thought it was fantastic to see the guts of these things even if I never learned how they worked. We imagined how they worked. I have also done serious amounts of construction work. Early on, I became fascinated with the different systems and components of a building that are hidden behind the drywall. A house is a giant sculpture.

In your studio practice, how do you do to try and push your medium into new directions?

Without question, the way to push yourself into new directions is to collaborate with other creative folks and occasionally work on projects you might normally not get involved in. Some of the biggest jumps in my processes have happened while working on projects with other people. A new material, process, idea or good friend are all things you should expect to encounter, when you team up on stuff.

Do the sculptures come from the drawings, or vice versa when developing the concept for exhibitions?

Drawings come first in most cases. Drawing is the best way to work out those ideas without getting too invested. In terms of the actual construction of a thing, drawings are the only way I can ever figure out the complicated parts. The laws of gravity are strictly enforced when you start making stuff for real. That is the biggest challenge to overcome. In a drawing, you can engineer something and it just works.

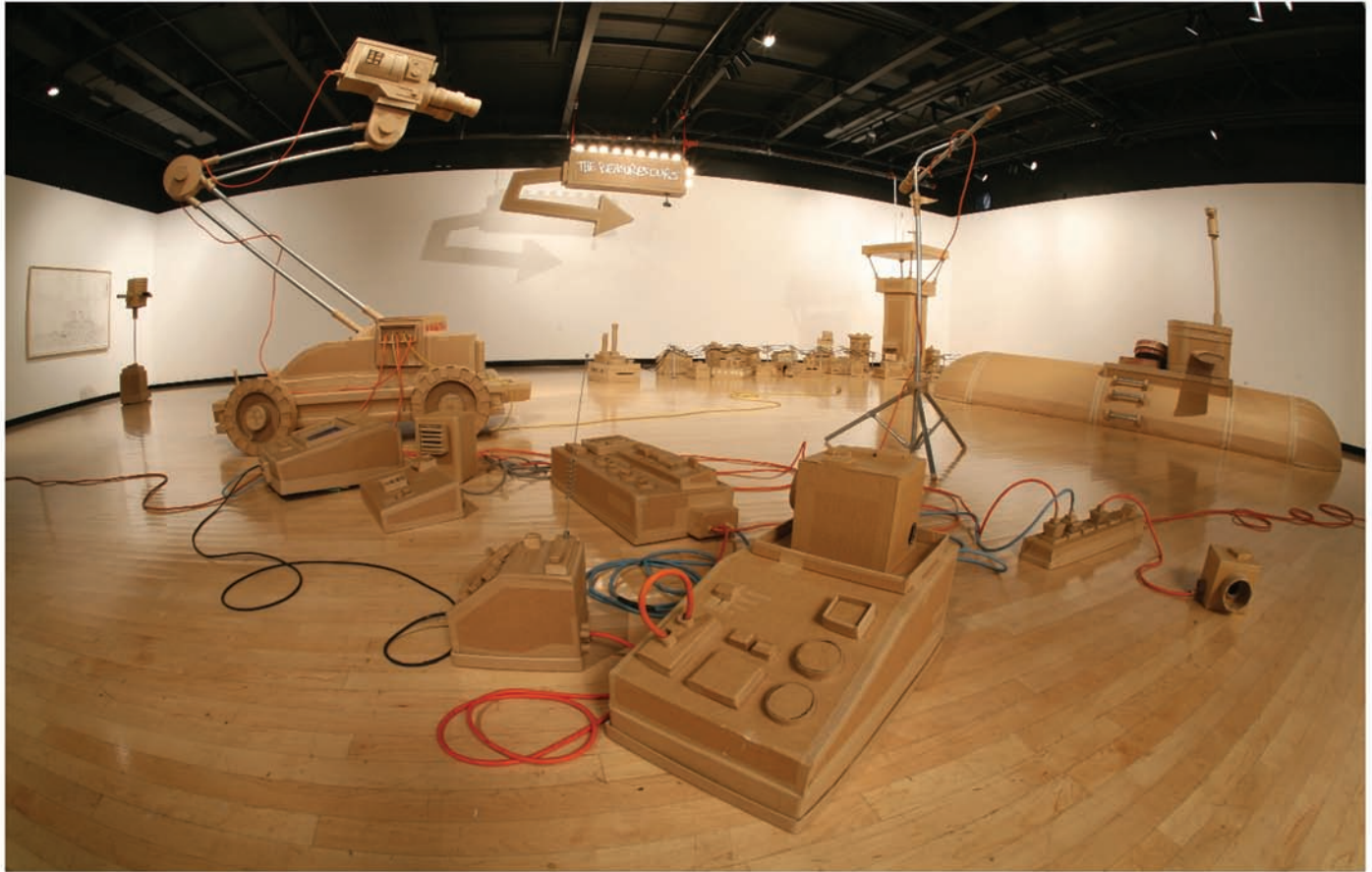
I do build many things without drawing first, but the same process happens in your head. You draw it out in the space between your ears and just work fast before you forget. The drawings are a way of being able to let go of the images. It's ok to forget once it has been drawn out.

What do you hope the viewer takes away from this current exhibition?

Slow and steady observation, and a renewed interest in the tools we use to explore space. The telescope is a giant telephoto lens. It empowers by moving vast amounts of information, over insane distances, directly into your eyeball. On the flipside, a telescope causes you to feel small and insignificant in a way as well. By having the large scope trail back down to this small-scale command/data recovery station, I hoped to push that feeling of smallness. We have the best equipment, in the darkest place, on the highest peak, under the clearest sky and still what do we really know about the "space" around us?



After and Before, 2009. Ink on paper, 30 x 25 inches.



Installation View, California State University, Long Beach, 2006.



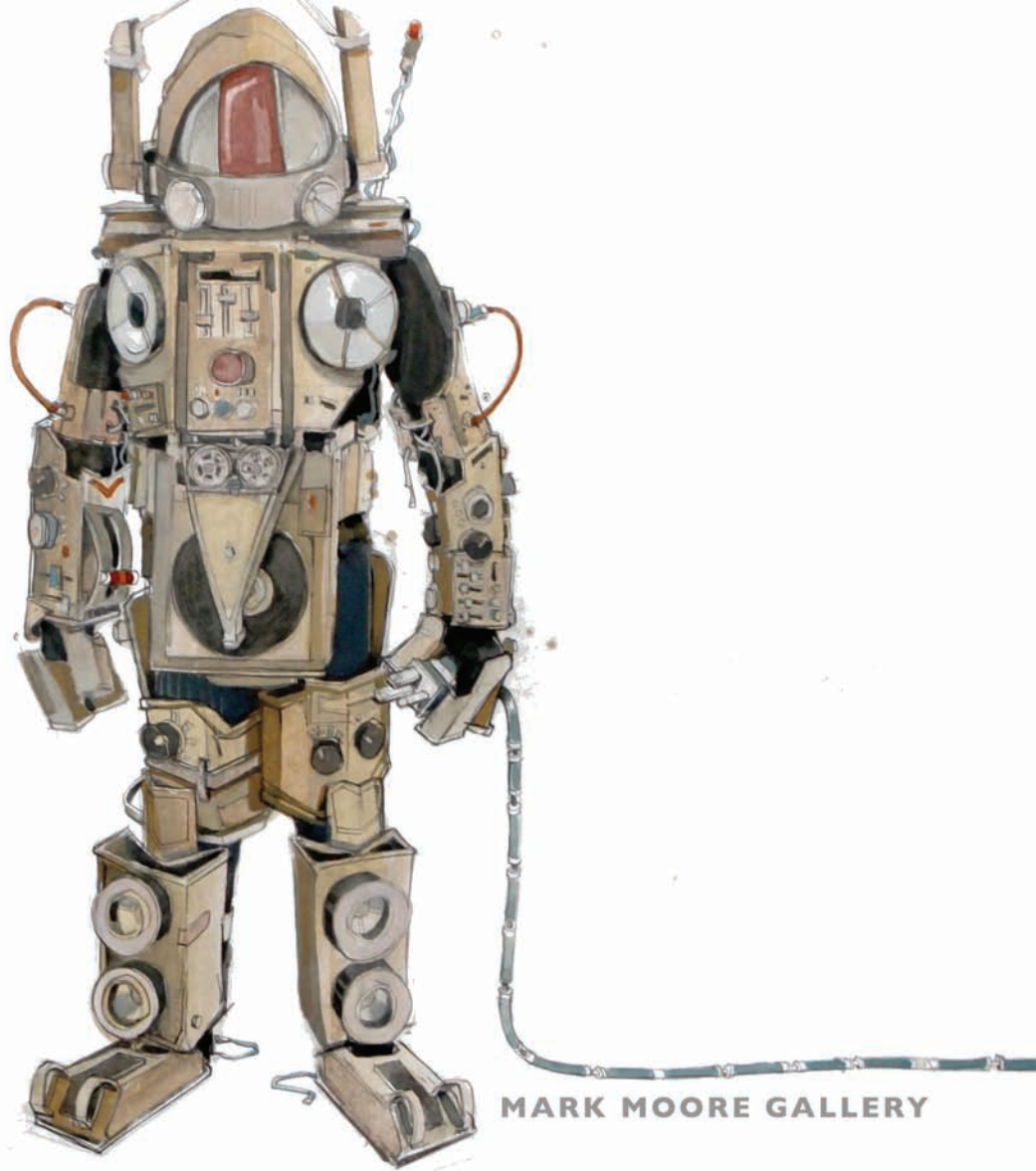
Artist's Studio, 2011.

“His constructions proudly say ‘handmade,’ evidence of the human touch lacking in our increasingly virtual lives.”

– Leah Stoddard, Adjunct Curator of Contemporary Art, Taubman Museum of Art, 2011

MIK/DJ Bot, 2011. Ink and watercolor on paper, 19 x 24 inches.

KIEL JOHNSON



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In Need of a Shower, 2011. Ink and watercolor on paper, 19 x 24 inches.



Publish or Perish, 2009. Pine ply, steel, aluminum, ink on paper, chipboard, 96 x 42 x 92 inches.

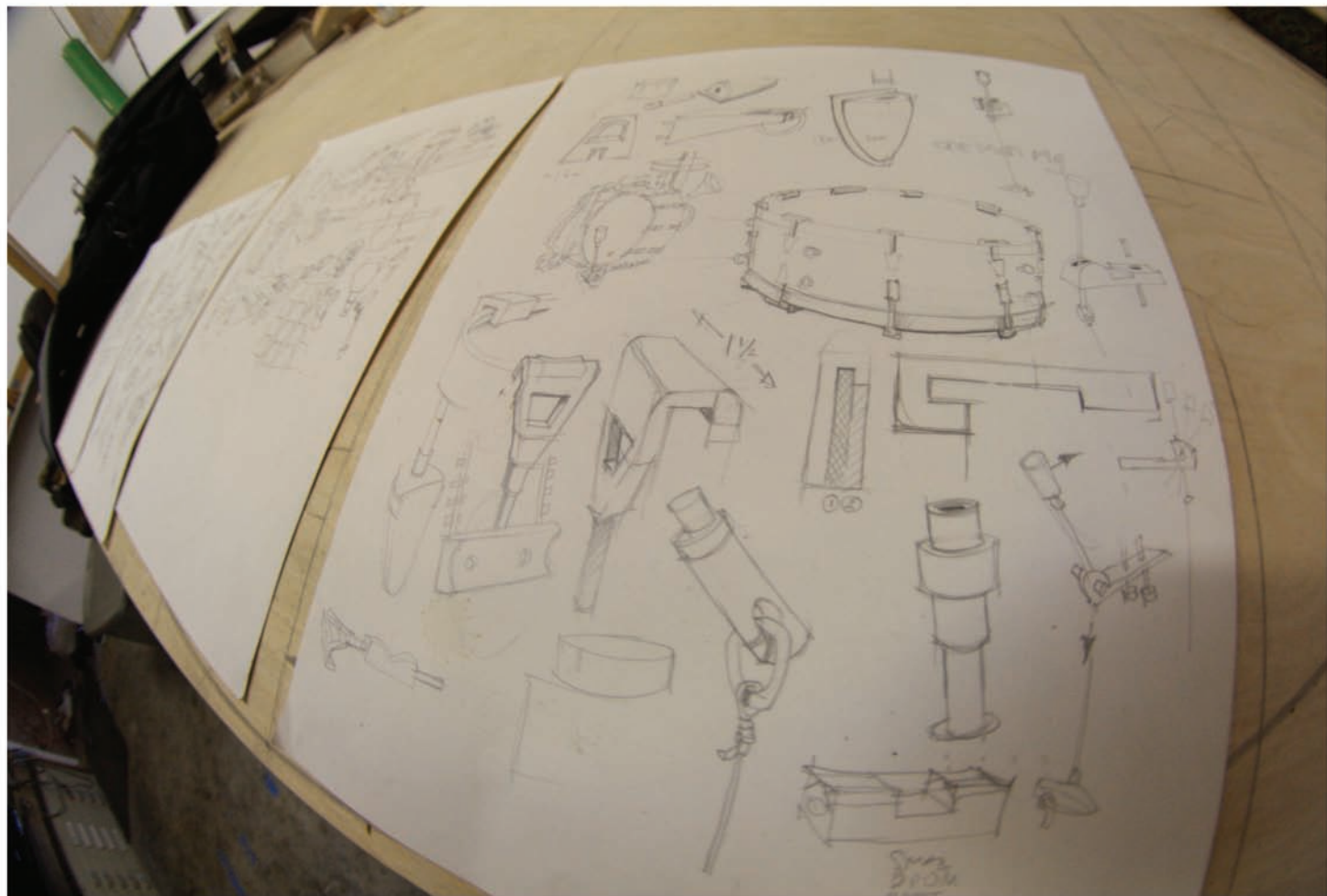


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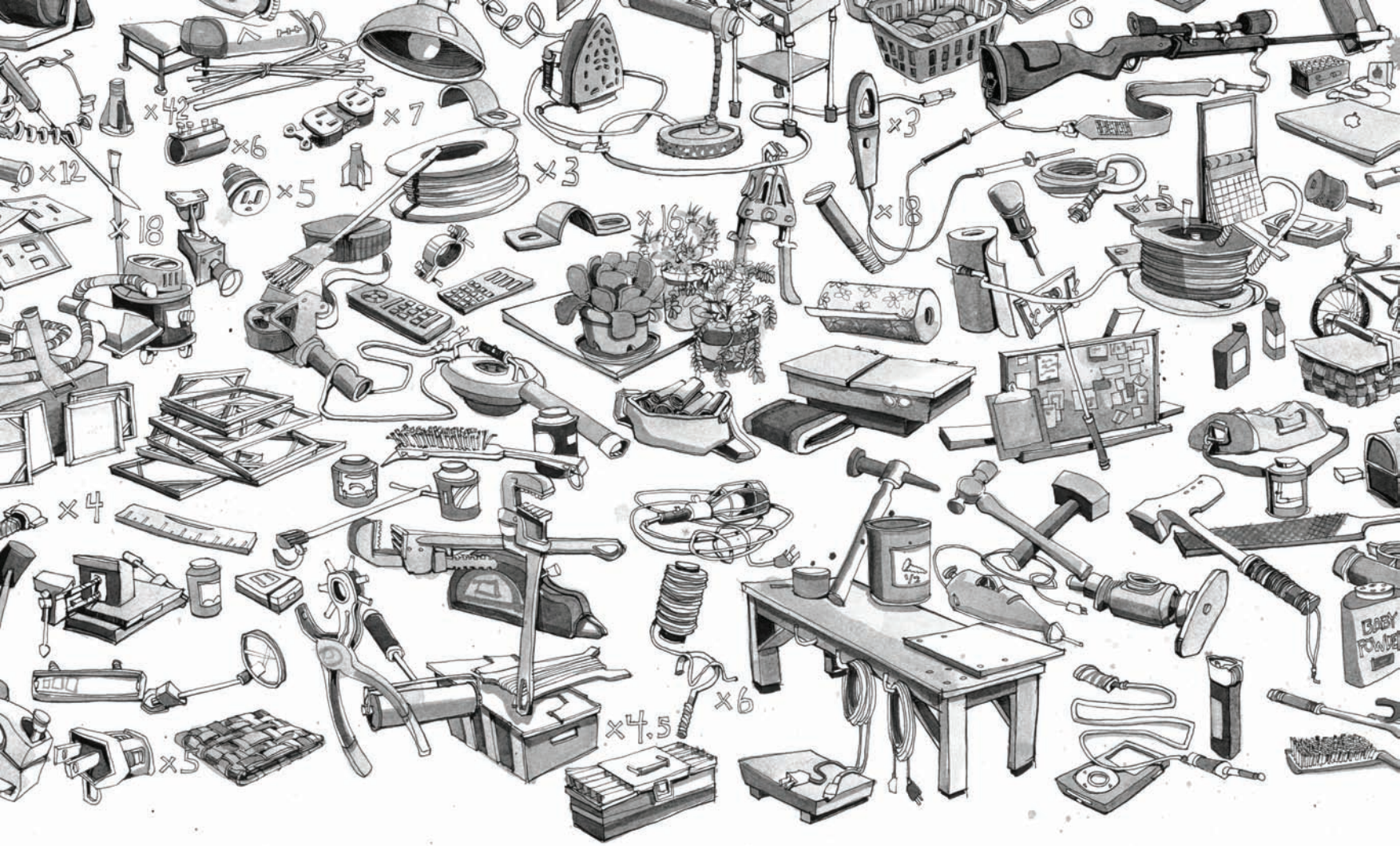


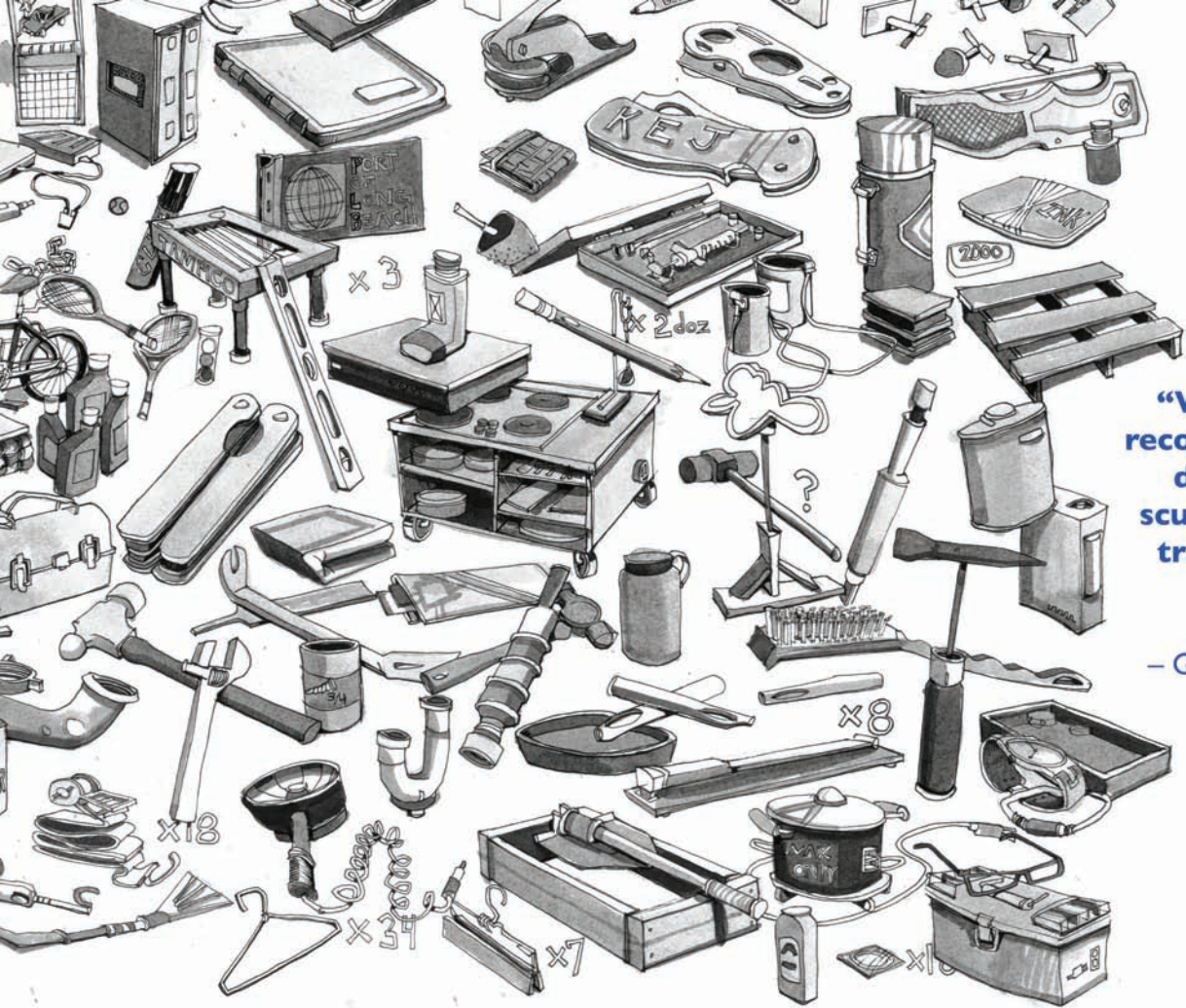
Above: *Taps and Revelry*, 2010. Chipboard, plastic tubing, high density foam, and uv resin, 16 x 9 x 7 inches.

Left: *8-bit Gary*, 2010. High density foam and cardboard, 24 x 36 x 75 inches.



Artist's Studio, 2010.





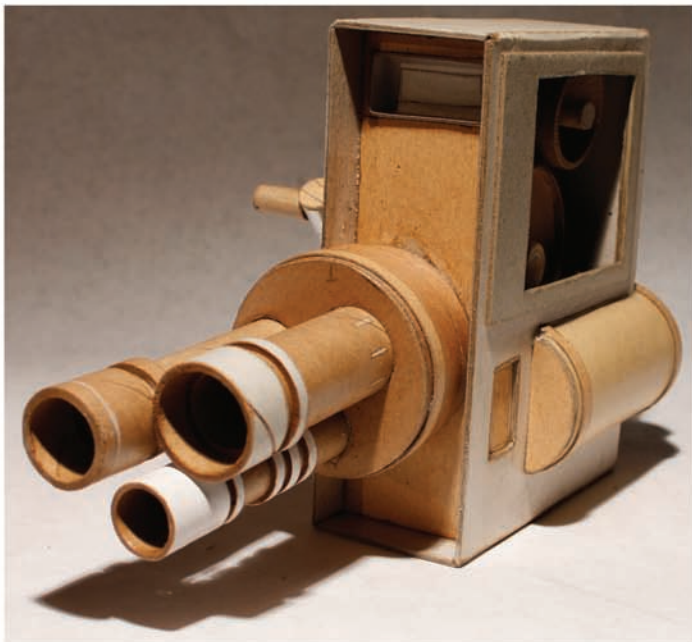
“With an almost instantly recognizable style, his distinct drawings and cardboard sculptures make explicit the transformation of humble materials into form.”

– Greg Stefano, Cool Hunting, 2011

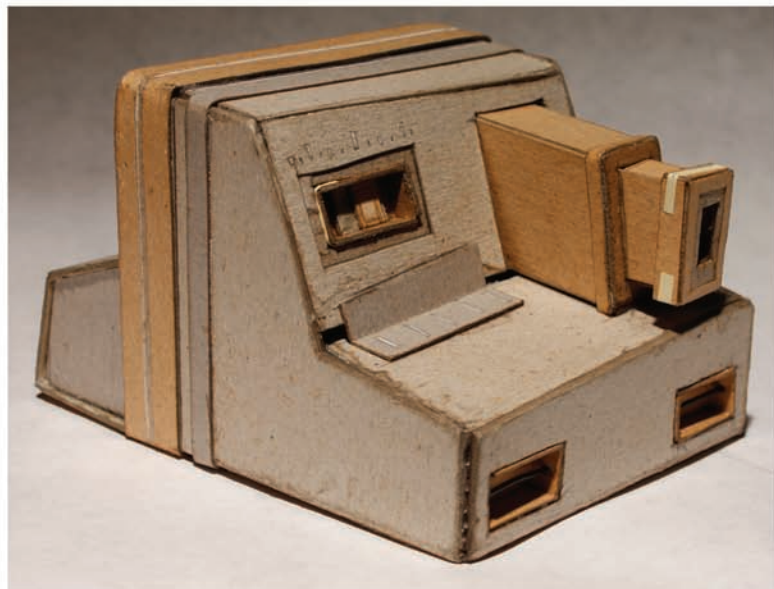
Everything I Own, 2009. Charcoal on Paper, 51 x 130 inches.



Point and Shoot #1, 2010. Chipboard, Canvas, and Fabric, 17 x 6 x 4 inches.



8mm #2, 2010. Chipboard and canvas, 8 x 6 x 13 inches.



Polaroid #1, 2010. Chipboard and canvas, 4 x 5 x 7 inches.



“His cartoons feel weirdly solid and real, while his physical objects are like cartoons come to life. Johnson has created his own wonderful world, distinct from ours, but always open to visitors.”

– OC Weekly, "Best Visual Artist: Kiel Johnson" (2008)



Busker Rig, 2010. Chipboard, high density foam, conduit, waxed canvas, pine, aluminum, 72 x 36 x 103 inches.

Opposite Page: *Everything He Wears*, 2010. Sumi ink and watercolor, 36 x 53 inches.



Export the Output, 2008. Cardboard, chipboard, and acrylic, 48 x 96 inches.



Artist's Studio, 2010





Opposite Page: *This just in...*, 2011. Douglas fir, plywood, chipboard, aluminum tubing, and acrylic, 48 x 60 x 54 inches.
Above: *This just in...* (Detail)

BIO

Kiel Johnson

Born 1975, Kansas City, MO

Lives and works in Los Angeles, CA

Education

2000 MFA, Drawing & Painting, California State University Long Beach, CA

1998 BFA, Sculpture & Drawing, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS

Solo Exhibitions

- 2011 *One Thing Leads to Another*, Taubman Museum of Art, Roanoke, VA
- 2010 *New Work*, Davidson Contemporary, New York, NY
- 2009 *Publish or Perish*, Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica, CA
- 2008 *New Work*, Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica, CA
The Awesomist Tomorrow, Nancy Margolis Gallery, New York, NY
The Awesomist Tomorrow, POVevolving Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2007 *Friction Ain't Fiction*, Irvine Art Center, Irvine, CA
- 2006 *LO-FI*, Raid Projects, Los Angeles, CA
- 2005 *Sub-Scribed*, Art Front Space, Hollywood, CA
Views From Above, Louisiana Tech University, Main Gallery, Ruston, CA
- 2004 *Hothouse Exotica*, Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City, CA
New Drawings, Creative Artist Agency, Beverly Hills, CA
These Are A Few of Our Favorite Things, Veinto y Agua Gallery, Long Beach, CA
- 2003 *Kiel Johnson – Large Scale Works on Panel*, Max L. Gatov Galley, California State University, Long Beach, Long Beach, CA
Kiel Johnson – Drawings on Paper, Art Concepts, Santa Monica, CA
- 2001 *Kiel Johnson - New Drawings*, Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO

Two Person Exhibitions

- 2011 *Kiel Johnson, Cordy Ryman: Construct*, Mark Moore Gallery, Culver City, CA

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2012 *paperless*, Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem, NC
- 2011 *New Image Sculpture*, The McNay, San Antonio, TX
- 2009 *Drawing Itself: A Survey of Contemporary Practice*, Brattleboro Museum and Art Center, Brattleboro, VT
- 2008 *This End Up: The Art of Cardboard*, San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA
Systems Theory, Torrance Art Museum, Torrance, CA
Narrations, Nancy Margolis Gallery, New York, NY
Ground Us, Huntington Beach Art Center, Huntington Beach, CA
- 2007 *Atmospheric Conditions*, Architecture and Design Museum, Los Angeles, CA
True Métier: Call For Entries '06-'07, Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum, Santa Barbara, CA
- 2006 *Drawings*, Gallery C, Hermosa Beach, CA
Art LA, Special Installation, Raid Projects, Los Angeles, CA
- 2005 *Nice to Meet You*, Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica, CA
Fresh, MOCA Geffen Contemporary, Los Angeles, CA
Genesis, San Louis Obispo Art Center, San Louis Obispo, CA
Poison In The Pilaf, Equator Gallery, Venice, CA
- 2004 *New Drawings*, Fluid Design, Santa Monica, CA
OooOlathe!, A Collaborative Society, with Travis Millard, 1269 Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Reunited, with Mark Cowardin, Art & Design Gallery, University of Kansas, KS
This is What You Want, Bettcher Gallery, Miami, FL
NINE, Gallery C, Hermosa Beach, CA
- 2003 *Open*, curator Karin Higa, Gallery 825, Beverly Hills, CA
Dog Days Group Show, curator Chris Miles, Achuna-Hansen, Los Angeles, CA

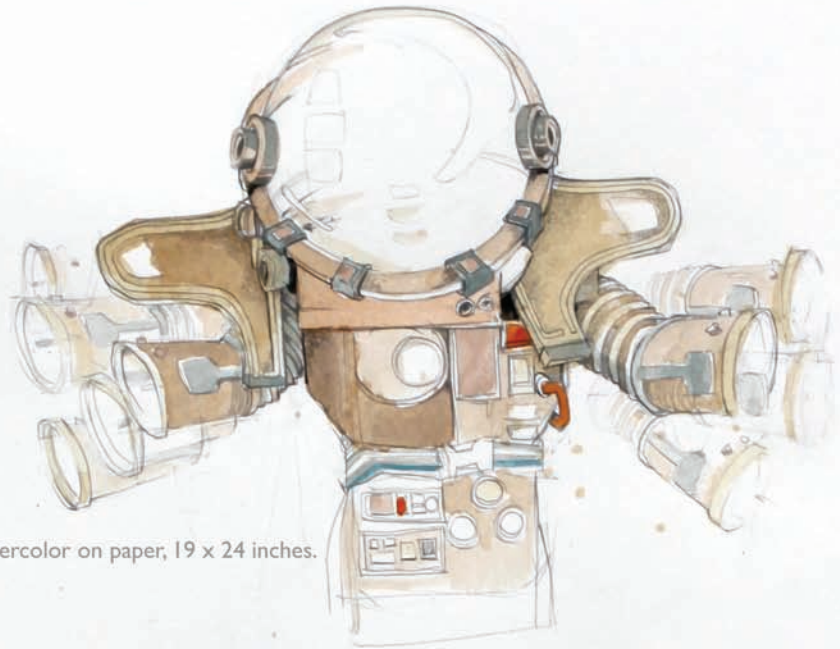
- 2002 *Kiel Johnson – New Drawings*, V.A. Gallery, Long Beach, CA
Strange Comfort, Midwest Myth, curated with Marcus Cain, Gatov Gallery West, Long Beach, CA
The Summer Show, Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO
Embroidered Void, California State University, Long Beach, CA
- 2001 *Fantasy Caboose*, California State University, Long Beach, CA
Father Kvapils Children, curator Matt Gleason, Eye-Five Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Insights- 2001, University Art Museum, Long Beach, CA
Annual Juried Exhibition, curator Kim Abeles, Second City Ocean Center Gallery, Long Beach, CA
Odyssey: Adventures in Artistic Expression, California State University, Long Beach, CA
- 2000 *Summer Show*, Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO
- 1999 Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO
- 1997 *Second Annual Plains States Exhibition*, Norman R. Eppink Art Gallery, Emporia, KS
Kiel Johnson, Drawings and Sculpture, Student Union Gallery, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS
Blue Fish Invitational, Lawrence, KS
Kansas City Artist Coalition Second Annual Drawing Show, Kansas City, MO
- 1995 *Barn Show*, Lawrence, KS
Scholarship Show, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS

Public Collections

Creative Artist Agency, Beverly Hills (CA)
Tubert International, Los Angeles (CA)
Sprint World Headquarters, Kansas City (MO)
Fudge Factory Comics, Los Angeles (CA)
Todd Oldham, New York (NY)

Awards/Honors

Pollock-Krazner Grant, 2008
Durfee Foundation ARC Grant, 2007
CSULB Outstanding Creative Achievement Award, 2003
Marilyn Werby Memorial Scholarship for the Arts, 2002
Lockwood Scholarship, 1997
Helen & Kevin Hoover Award, 1997
Harry & Jesse Jacobs Prize, 1997
Daniel Mac Morris award for Outstanding Work, 1997
University of Kansas Scholarship for the Arts, 1996
Richard Hollander Foundation Scholarship, 1996
Richard Hollander Foundation Scholarship, 1995
Kansas Basis Studies Scholarship, 1994
Scholastic Art Portfolio Award, 1993
Gannet Outdoor Environmental Billboard, Grand Prize, 1993



Sarah, 2011. Ink and watercolor on paper, 19 x 24 inches.

Front Cover: *Cameras, Artist's Studio*, 2009. Chipboard, canvas, and fabric.

Back Cover: *Scope Studies (Detail)*, 2011. Ink and watercolor on Paper, 19 x 24 inches.

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